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BOOK NOTICES

Constructive Natural Theology. By Newman Smyth. New York: Scribner, 1913. Pp. x + 123. \$1.00.

The author says correctly that the number is increasing of those who desire to know the effect upon Christian religion and theology of a full acceptance of the results of scientific research in all fields. This little book is the publication of lectures intended to meet the needs of such inquirers and to lead them through realms whence they may get fresh inspiration and a broader faith. The volume is the forerunner of a larger treatise on the meaning of personality as a fact in nature. It deals with the scientific materials for theology, the method and problems of theology, Christ as a final fact in nature, and scientific spirituality. Dr. Smyth holds that the minister who would be most effective in today's environment must be acquainted with the best that has been done in the entire range of the natural sciences—not that the minister should be an expert scientist himself, but that he should be able to lay hands upon any part of the field, know what the original authorities in science have done, and turn their work to account in constructive theological thinking. The book should have a wide circulation.

Christ and the Dramas of Doubt. By Ralph Tyler Flewelling. New York: Eaton & Mains, 1913. Pp. xi + 277. \$1.00.

The subtitle is "Studies in the Problem of Evil." The book gives a new and attractive literary form to the discussion of dark problems which have troubled men ever since they began to reflect on life and destiny. In primeval ages, man was not a doubter. Fear and despair were constant factors in his existence; but to his childlike imagination and unripe intellectual faculties, the thing we call "doubt" was unknown. Doubt has always been the negation of conventional formulas; and hence there can be no negative until there has first been some kind of positive, constructive belief. The literature of doubt appears, not in the beginning, but in the maturity or decadence of culture.

This book studies a number of great dramas, from various historical periods, which give expression to the struggle of the human spirit with characteristic forms of doubt. The movement of its thought is through five steps to the conclusion. The first step is typified by the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, in which there is a revolt against an inhuman god and a struggle with an impossible theology. Why does Prometheus, who has brought down fire from heaven, and done great good to man, find him-

self bound to the rock? The second step is that of Job, in which the struggle is with the mystery of pain, and in which the conventional theology denies Job's integrity in a vain attempt to save itself. The third step is that of *Hamlet*, in which the struggle is with the problem of an outraged moral order, and in which the innocent seems to be borne down by an unmerited weight of woe. The fourth step is that of *Faust*, in which the struggle is with the problem of redemption. Can man be saved by his own activity alone? The fifth step is that of Ibsen's *Brand*, in which the conflict arises out of the failure of spiritual ideals. Whence comes the futility of the iron conscience which demands that everything in life be sacrificed to the attainment of an impossible perfection? All these doubts, theoretical and practical, are resolved by Christ, in whom God is personally identified with the struggling and suffering life of humanity. The book is written in a clear and simple style, with frequent flashes of insight; and it will have interest and instruction for many who are actively concerned about the problem of evil.

France Today: Its Religious Orientation.

By Paul Sabatier. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1913. Pp. xii + 302. \$2.00.

A deeply interesting and informing essay, not merely stating facts, but weaving them into a sympathetic treatment which gives a view of France at an angle not familiar to many outsiders. The legend of the superficial Frenchman, says the author, is hard to kill. It has penetrated everywhere, and with such success that some Frenchmen themselves receive it as a kind of unquestionable fact. Most foreigners, encouraged by this, judge France by what they gather of Paris in their hasty visits, glancing through some society papers, and seeing the kind of literature displayed on the railway book-stalls. The apparent skepticism of France may well be a faith ignorant of itself. The note which M. Sabatier thus strikes in his introduction sounds throughout the volume.

It is significant that a book of this kind should be published in a series called "Library of the Social Movement." It is a study of contemporary religion in France from a purely sociological point of view. The author takes neither Catholic, nor Protestant, nor atheistic ground in studying his fellow-countrymen. He is primarily *French*, looking with admirable perspective at the whole national life as that of an organism, or group, having a character and existence of its own, which transcends and envelops Catholic, Protestant, and atheist alike.

Never has the activity of the Roman church in France been so great, nor its organiza-